

REMARKS

Claims 14-33 are currently pending in the application. As a result of this Response, claims 1-13 are cancelled and claims 14-33 are new. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 to 5 and 8 to 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Moro et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,348,800). This rejection is respectfully traversed. Allowable subject matter (original claim 6) has been placed into original claim 1 (now claim 14); therefore, claim 14 and claims 15-20 depending from claim 14 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Allowable subject matter (original claim 6) has been placed into original claim 2 (now claim 21); therefore, claim 21 and claims 22-27 depending from claim 21 are believed to be in condition for allowance. For original claims 8-11, please see the "Claims 28-33" (newly added claims) explanation below.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1 to 5 and 8 to 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yasuhiro et al. (Japanese Pat. Doc. No. 5-36514, cited in the IDS submitted October 17, 2003) taken in view of the admitted known prior art disclosed in applicants' specification, page 2, lines 29 to 32. This rejection is respectfully traversed. Allowable subject matter (original claim 6) has been placed into original claim 1 (now claim 14); therefore, claim 14 and claims 15-20 depending from claim 14 are believed to

be in condition for allowance. Allowable subject matter (original claim 6) has been placed into original claim 2 (now claim 21); therefore, claim 21 and claims 22-27 depending from claim 21 are believed to be in condition for allowance. For original claims 8-11, please see the "Claims 28-33" (newly added claims) explanation below.

Claims 28-33

Applicants have added new claims 28-33, claim 28 is originally filed claim 8 with additional features described in the specification text from page 10, line 32 to page 11, line 17. For the Examiner's convenience, claim 28 is repeated below with the additional material underlined.

28. (new) A method for producing a soft magnetic material comprising:
a surface oxidation step of forming oxide films on the surfaces of a soft magnetic powder;

a step of preparing a molding compound of the soft magnetic powder for press-molding the soft magnetic powder;

a press molding step of press-molding the molding compound of the soft magnetic powder into a predetermined shape; and

a sintering step of sintering the press-molded soft magnetic powder to produce a soft magnetic material, characterized by:

forming oxide films having a thickness of several nanometers on the surfaces of the soft magnetic powder by locally heating only the oxidized portion produced on the surfaces of the soft magnetic powder during the preparation of the powder, in an oxidizing atmosphere, to a temperature at which an oxide film is formed, and

using a millimeter wave sintering apparatus or a discharge plasma sintering apparatus in the surface oxidation step.

The invention of claims 28-33 features an oxide film, having a thickness of several nanometers, formed on the surfaces of the soft magnetic powder by locally heating only the surfaces of the soft magnetic powder in an oxidizing atmosphere, to a temperature at which an oxide film is formed, using a millimeter wave sintering apparatus or a discharge plasma sintering apparatus, in the surface oxidation step. These features are not disclosed or suggested in Moro et al., Yasuhiro et al. or the admitted known prior art (emphasis added).

Because the Applicants believe claim 28 is in condition for allowance, claims 29-33 are also believed to be in condition for allowance because of their dependency on claim 28.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Examiner states that claims 6, 7, 13 (sic) and 13 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, Applicants have added new claims 14-20, claim 14 (original claim 1 + original claim 6) of which contains original claim 6 allowable subject matter. The Applicants believe claim 14 and claims 15-20, which depend from claim 14, to be in condition for allowance. Additionally, Applicants have added new claims 21-27, claim 21 (original claim 2 + original claim 6) of which contains original claim 6 allowable subject matter. The Applicants believe claim 21 and claims 22-27, which depend from claim 21, are believed to be in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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